

4-MINUTE CESAREAN SCAR MASSAGE

HELPING YOUR CLIENT OR PATIENT RECONNECT TO
THEIR BODY AFTER A C-SECTION

By Jessie Mundell, BPHE, MHK, P.Kin

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4-Minute Cesarean Scar Massage Protocol

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One action we can take in Cesarean birth recovery is caring for the scar itself. This can go beyond letting the wound heal.

As fitness and health professionals, we can offer our clients and patients basic (or more advanced, depending on your scope of practice) education in C-section scar massage or mobilization.

Much has happened in the body during a Cesarean birth. Ensuring those affected tissues are moving well can impact how the body functions in the short and long term.

And perhaps just as importantly, providing gentle encouragement to someone to physically touch their body and their belly after a C-section can be powerful.

In this guide, you will learn a **simple to follow** and **manageable to implement**, 4-minute scar massage protocol you can offer your clients or patients to play with during their recovery.

The mobilization techniques in this guide were originally shown to me by my pelvic health physiotherapist, Gayle Hulme, at Lakeview Physiotherapy in Calgary, Alberta during my own C-section recoveries.

WHY WOULD YOUR CLIENT OR PATIENT DO SCAR MASSAGE?

Symptoms might be experienced after a C-section that are localized sensations to the scar itself, or might be more globally experienced in the body.

Sensations that might be related to the surgery and recovery, and let us know the scar and surrounding areas could use treatment are:

- pain, burning, or discomfort during intercourse or penetration
- clitoral, vulvar, or labial pain
- numbness or highly sensitive sensations around the scar
- lumpy or hard spots over or around the scar
- feeling of tightness or rigidity around the scar
- pelvic pain, lower back pain, pain in the groin

Scar tissue forms during recovery. It is often not laid down as ‘neatly’ and is less pliable/flexible than the original tissues. Massage or mobilization work may help the tissues move with less restriction.

Additionally, these efforts could help re-train the sensory nerves that might be on high alert, to find some calm with touch and pressure.

There is also evidence to suggest that the appearance of scarring might be reduced with some mobilization techniques and this might be valuable to your clients or patients.

WHEN WOULD ONE BEGIN C-SECTION SCAR MASSAGE?

The general guidelines are that C-section scar massage can be started after the scar has fully healed. Often, your client or patient will get the 'all clear' at their 6-week checkup with their medical provider if there is no infection and the scar has closed over.

It is important for your people to know that it is never too late to start scar massage. Even if it has been years or decades since they have had a C-section, they may experience benefits from starting now.

DETAILS ON THE 4-MINUTE SCAR MASSAGE PROTOCOL

This is not the only version of C-section scar massage! That said, it is a simple, quick method to help your clients or patients build confidence in touching their own scar, becoming more familiar with how their belly feels, and getting the tissues moving with their own hands on their body.

Our goal is to encourage feelings of safety and competency with this mini-massage routine.

If wanted, they can use most any oil (coconut, almond, olive, etc) on their fingers and skin to help the tissues move more easily. That said, it can be useful to have some 'grip' on the skin.

Coach them to start with gentle pressure applied to the skin and progressively increase the pressure used as their comfort level increases. They do NOT need to use extremely hard touch to experience results.

There should not be pain with these techniques. There might be sensations of pulling, stretching, burning, or some discomfort.

I want to recognize that it can be unnerving and highly emotional to touch the scar directly - or even look at it - for some. I recommend starting to massage the belly well above and below the scar, if that is more comfortable, and moving closer to the scar itself when/if the person feels ready.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD ONE DO C-SECTION SCAR MASSAGE?

While someone could practice scar massage daily, it is not likely to be necessary to experience benefits, or will not be possible for most postpartum people to do so. They might want to practice this 3-4 times per week.

The best time of day to do the scar massage? When they remember when to do it! For many, this will be when they get into bed at night. I encourage my clients to set a timer on their phone and follow the directions for the 4-minute routine from there.

You could have your clients or patients test the scar massage protocol for 2-4 weeks to see if they notice any change or shifts in their sensations or symptoms, and continue on if they enjoy the process, or if they are experiencing benefits.

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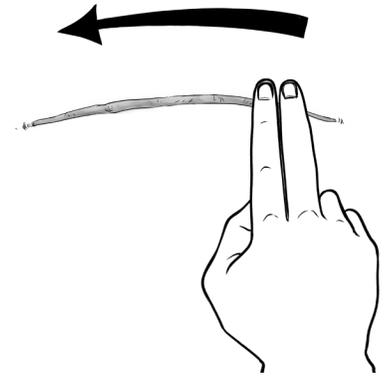
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4-MINUTE C-SECTION SCAR MASSAGE ROUTINE

▶ STEP 1: RIGHT TO LEFT

Start from the right side of your scar and with smooth strokes, run 2-3 fingers from the right side, all the way through to the left side of the scar. Press down into your belly with gentle pressure and hold this pressure as you run the length of the scar.

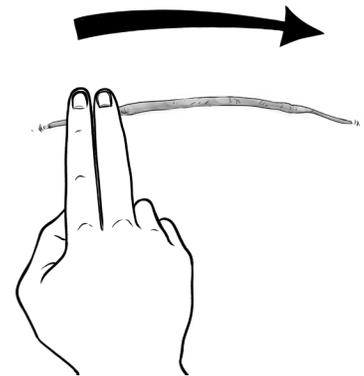
Do this for 1 minute.



▶ STEP 2: LEFT TO RIGHT

Start from the left side of your scar and with smooth strokes run 2-3 fingers from the left side, all the way through to the right side of the scar. Press down into your belly with gentle pressure and hold this pressure as you run the length of the scar.

Do this for 1 minute.



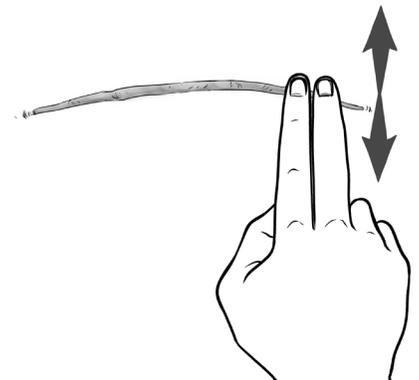
▶ STEP 3: PRESSURE AND WIGGLES

Start on the right side of your scar and place 2-3 fingers directly over top (or slightly above or below) the scar.

Press down into your belly and keeping that pressure on the tissues, shift the pressure up (towards your belly button) and down (towards your pubic bone) in each spot. Imagine you are pulling the scar up and down.

Move your fingers slightly to the left on the scar and repeat this into-the-belly pressure and wiggle up and down. Continue to do this all along the scar until you reach the left side and then work your way back to the right side.

Do this for 1 minute.



▶ STEP 4: CIRCLES

There is no set pattern here and you do not have to stay on the scar itself. Massage in a circular pattern all around your lower belly and pelvic region. Inside the hip bones, up to the belly button, over and around the scar—wherever feels good. Simply get the tissues moving.

Do this for 1 minute.

